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MONITORING OF INTERNATIONAL PLANS AND PROGRAMMES OF ACTION

Statement submitted by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), a non-governmental organization in consultative status (category II) with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is circulated in accordance with paragraphs 29 and 30 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968.

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The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) has 33,000,000 members aged 50 years or over, 42,000 of whom live in 152 countries throughout the world. AARP's main purpose is to "bring lifetimes of experience and leadership to serve all generations". AARP is a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category II.

Our comments focus on the conceptual framework of a programme for the preparation and observance of the International Year of Older Persons (1999). In particular, we wish to speak about section VI on practical preparations for the Year.

As background, the impetus for Coalition '99, began during the sessions of the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit for Social Development, when the secretariat for the World Summit for Social Development sought open dialogue regarding the Declaration and Programme of Action from an ageing perspective.

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AARP agreed to assist the secretariat and sent the World Summit-related documents for the second session of the Preparatory Committee, along with a questionnaire and a request for comments, to AARP's colleagues among ageing organizations world wide. Over 180 documents were distributed in English, French and Spanish.

Given the time constraints allowing less than a month for responses, a remarkable number of responses were received. The results were published in the document, On Behalf of Aging. The interest that was generated through this dialogue encouraged AARP to send another questionnaire - the Coalition '99 Questionnaire - in order to begin planning for the International Year of Older Persons (1999).

Responses to the Coalition '99 Questionnaire have been equally encouraging. Ageing networks and coalitions are in place; they are eager to be involved in the planning and observance of the Year in 1999. An analysis of the responses received as of January of this year revealed what may be taken as an overwhelming yes to continuing the international dialogue through Coalition '99.

Most respondents say they will promote the International Year of Older Persons in 1999 by using their networking systems and by sponsoring local events. What they would like to achieve is the following: to improve the image of the older person, promote understanding between generations, and bring international public awareness to the issues of older persons. The theme, "Towards a Society for All Ages", directly relates to the responses that we are receiving to the Coalition '99 Questionnaire.

The ageing network is eager to promote the International Year of Older Persons in 1999. The interest in Coalition '99 is increasing.

The International Year of Older Persons in 1999 will provide an opportunity to make a lasting difference in how societies and individuals integrate their ageing populations. In order to ensure that this opportunity is not lost, Coalition '99 is undertaking practical preparations and looks to the United Nations to continue in its leadership role, both substantively and technically.

Recognizing that the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat, the focal point for the Year (1999), is working within a limited budget for ongoing programme activities, we are concerned that there will be adequate resources to ensure the launch of practical programmes as well as effective coordination for the Year.

AARP requests the Commission for Social Development to examine the requirements of the Year, and ways and means of meeting those requirements. In AARP's view, additional resources are needed for an extended staff within the Department for Policy and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat to serve as the coordinating entity for the International Year of Older Persons in 1999.